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ABSTRACT

The marital relationship may have indirect, or second order socialization effects on the parent child relationship. To investigate the second order socialization effects in parent adolescent relatioships, 44 mostly white, middle-class families with a 13-year-old adolescent child were videotaped in three separate situations: adolescent with mother, with father, and with both parents. Parental behavior in these sessions was assessed by 18 judges using the Family Interaction Q Sort (Gjerde, Block and Block, 1981), which consists of 33 forced-choiced, implicative statements of parental socialization practices. An analysis of the results showed that mothers were more consistent and affective toward their adolescent child when the father was present. In the presence of the father, mothers had more influence and more control, and were more relaxed, spontaneous, and affectionate. Fathers were more involved with their adolescent child when the mother was absent. They were more equalitarian, protective, responsive, respectful, and likely to encourage individuality when interacting alone with their child. In dyadic settings fathers were more interested in having the child participate and give reasons for their decisions, and less likely to antagonize, exclude, and withdraw from the adolescent. When the mother was absent, fathers interacted in a less emotional manner and were less likely to do things their own way and to enforce directives. Although the findings indicate that parental behavior in dayds and trials differs it is unclear if this information is redundant or valuable predictive information. (BL)

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Parent-Adolescent Interaction in Family Context:

Importance of Second-order Effects

Recent examinations of parent-child relationships view the family as a system of triadic relations (e.g., Parke, Power, & Gottman, 1979). As noted by Belsky (1981), adding a third person, e.g., the father, does more than to create an additional parent-child relationship; it transforms the mother-child dyad into a family system composed by both parental and marital relationships. The concept of second-order, or indirect socialization effects (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Lewis & Feiring, 1983; Parke & O'Leary, 1976; Parke, Power, & Gottman, 1979; Pedersen, Anderson, & Cain, 1980) occupies a central place in recent examinations of such reciprocality among family subsystems. Second-order effects refers usually, although not uniquely, to the effect of the quality of the marital relationship on parent-child relations.

Methodologically, second-order effects are usually examined by observing parent-child interactions in the presence versus the absence of the second parent. In general, these studies converge to show that the frequency of parent-child interactions is considerable higher in the dyad than in the triad (e.g., Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Parke & O'Leary, 1976), and that the quality of the husband-wife relationship can have both an enhancing and a conflicting influence on parental behavior, especially for fathers (Belsky, 1979).

So far, second-order effects have only been studied in familes with infants. The current study examines second-order socialization effects in families with young adolescents. Toward this end, mother-adolescent and father-adolescent relationships were compared with and without the second parent. Next to infancy, family relations at adolescence are widely regarded as the

period most warranting examination of parent-child relations. The acceleration of biological changes, the attainment and stabilization of cognitive maturity, and the emergence of the peer group as an influential source of influence, all these factors may create increased strain and tension in family relations, especially between mothers and sons (Steinberg, 1981)

Method

Subjects

The 44 families included in this study are participating in a longitudinal study of ego and cognitive processes initiated by Professors Jack and Jeanne Block in 1968 when the children were 3-years old (see Block & Block, 1980, for a description of the study). The 44 families are mostly white and middle class.

Assessment of Parental Behavior

Parental socialization practices were examined in structured but evocative situations when the adolescents were 13-years old. The adolescent was observed in three separate situations: (a) once with the mother alone, (b) once with the father alone, and (c) once with both parents simultaneously.

18 highly qualified judges assessed video-taped parental behavior in the three sessions using the Family Interaction Q-sort (FIQ) (Gjerde, Block, & Block, 1981). The FIQ consists of 33 implicative statements of parental socialization practices and is administered in a forced-choice, nine-step distribution. The judging procedure included a relatively large sample of heterogeneous judges (N = 18), systematic variation of judge combinations, and

assignment of two judges to each family rating session. Two judges were assigned to each interaction session and their independent evaluations were subsequently composited. Thus, the resulting Q-sort formulations will possess a higher degree of generalization and be relatively independent of private sets of theoretical preferences. Judges assessed the behavior of (a) the mother interacting with the adolescent alone (reliability = .70), (b) the mother interacting with the adolescent in the presence of the father (reliability = .72), (c) the father interacting with the adolescent alone (reliability = .70), and (d) the father interacting with the adolescent in the presence of the mother (reliability = .72). No judge assessed any family member more than once thus securing absolute independence of ratings.

Results

The mean values of each FIQ item in the dyadic and triadic situations were compared separately for mothers and fathers. The items which showed significant differences in mean values ($p<.10$, two-tailed) are presented in Table 1 and Table 2. The unequal sample sizes and the low number of girls included in the study, makes systematic comparisons between boys and girls difficult. Therefore, only the results for the total sample will be discussed but the tables will include as well the separate results for boys and girls whenever significant to provide additional perspective.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 1 reports changes in mothers' socialization practices with and without fathers. In general, mothers are more consistent and affective toward their adolescent children when the father is present. In the presence of fathers, mothers have more influence, they are more relaxed, spontaeous, interacts in an more emotional manner, and they show more affection than in dyads. Furthermore, mothers in triadic family settings have more influence and are more in control of the situations, they are also more consistent in their parental role, less bored, and less likely to make the child anxious.

Table 2 reports the changes in fathers' socialization practices toward the adolescent with and without mothers. In general, fathers are more involved with their adolescent children when the mother is absent. They are more equalitarian, protective, responsive, respectful, and likely to encourage individuality when interacting alone with their children. Fathers are also, in dyadic settings, more interested in having the child participate, and they give more reasons for their decisions. Moreover, they are less likely to antagonize, withdraw from, and to exclude the adolescent., They also interact in a less emotional manner, are less likely to do things their own way, and to enforce directives than when the mother is present.

Discussion

The current study examined how the functioning of a parent-adolescent dyad changes when it becomes part of a mother-father-adolescent family triad. Most importantly, the results show that the presence of the second parent influences fathers and mothers differently. Mothers were described as more con-

sistent and affective toward their children when the father was present. In contrast, fathers were described as less equalitarian, less concerned with individuality, and more likely to exclude the child when the mother was present.

These results are only partly consistent with the results obtained for families with younger children. Clarke-Stewart (1978) argued that the influence of fathers on mothers may be more important than the reverse, and that the father's influence on child development is primarily indirect (mediated through the mother) whereas the mother's influence is more direct. There is evidence in the triadic situation that the father's primary role is to support the mother and that the father is less involved with the adolescent when the mother is present. But importantly, the results indicate also that both mothers and fathers influence the other parent in important ways and that the nature of the influence is different for the two parents. The presence of the father has an enhancing effect on the mother-adolescent relationship, but not conversely. The finding that the father is most involved with their adolscent children when the mother is not present is important since the father may spend more time alone with his children as they grow older, at least with his sons. The importance of the father as a direct source of influence on child development may therefore increase as the children grow older.

The implications of these situation-differentiated socialization practices for child and adolescent development remain unexplored. Parental behavior in dyads and triads differ, but further studies are needed to determine whether observations of parental behavior in these two different contexts for family interaction provide redundant information or whether valuable predictive information is lost by failing to differentiate between parental

socialization practices with and without the second parent.

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Table 1

Mothers' behavior toward adolescent children in the presence and in the absence of the father

All		Girls		Boys		FIQ Item
T	Direction	T	Direction	T	Direction	
1.74*	DMC<TMC					Mother has influence over child
		1.74*	DMC<TMC			Mother is task oriented
1.66*	DMC>TMC					Mother tends toward over-control
				2.02**	DMC<TMC	Mother expresses opinions openly
2.39**	DMC>TMC			2.60***	DMC>TMC	Mother surrenders control of situation
2.52**	DMC<TMC	1.66*	DMC<TMC	1.93*	DMC<TMC	Mother is consistent in parental role
2.87***	DMC<TMC			2.79***	DMC<TMC	Mother is at ease and relazed
2.34**	DMC>TMC			3.09***	DMC>TMC	Mother is bored
				1.67*	DMC>TMC	Mother pressures child to participate
				1.79*	DMC>TMC	Mother withdraws from participation
1.70*	DMC>TMC	2.04*	DMC>TMC			Mother makes child anxious
1.76*	DMC<TMC			1.93*	DMC<TMC	Mother's interaction appears emotional
1.66*	DMC<TMC			2.00**	DMC<TMC	Mother shows affection
				2.21**	DMC<TMC	Mother does things her own way

Note: FIQ = Family Interaction Q-sort
DMC = Mother's behavior toward adolescent child in dyad
TMC = Mother's behavior toward adolescent child in triad
The N's are 44 for the total sample, 16 for girls, and 28 for boys
DMC<TMC = Mean value of item is lower in dyad than in triad
DMC>TMC = Mean value of item is higher in dyad than in triad

* = $p<.05$
** = $p<.01$
*** = $p<.001$

Table 2

Fathers' behavior toward adolescent children in the presence and in the absence of the mother

All		Girls		Boys		FIQ Item
T	Direction	T	Direction	T	Direction	
1.99*	DFC>TFC			1.88*	DFC>TFC	Father is responsive to child
3.05***	DFC>TFC	1.80*	DFC>TFC	2.36**	DFC>TFC	Father is egalitarian
				2.02**	DFC<TFC	Father is critical and hostile
2.62***	DFC>TFC			2.51***	DFC>TFC	Father pressures child to participate
1.86*	DFC>TFC			1.70*	DFC>TFC	Father is protective of child
1.82*	DFC<TFC			1.84*	DFC<TFC	Father withdraws from participation
1.70*	DFC>TFC			2.14**	DFC>TFC	Father appears to respect child
2.44**	DFC>TFC					Father gives reason for his decisions
2.46***	DFC<TFC			2.46**	DFC<TFC	Father excludes child
1.85*	DFC<TFC			2.41**	DFC<TFC	Father antagonizes child
1.78*	DFC<TFC			1.70*	DFC<TFC	Father's interaction appears emotional
1.65*	DFC<TFC	1.67*	DFC<TFC			Father does things his own way
1.99**	DFC<TFC					Father enforces directives
2.03**	DFC>TFC			1.74*	DFC>TFC	Father encourages individuality

Note: FIQ = Family Interaction Q-sort
DFC = Father's behavior toward adolescent child in dyad
TFC = Father's behavior toward adolescent child in triad
The N's are 44 for the total sample, 16 for girls, and 28 for boys
DFC<TFC = Mean value of item is lower in dyad than in triad
DFC>TFC = Mean value of item is higher in dyad than in triad

* = $p<.05$
** = $p<.01$
*** = $p<.001$